

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 149433  
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E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 346 - JUNE 27, 1977

NOT RELEASABLE TO FOREIGN NATIONALS

1. LEBANON. THERE WAS HEAVY SHELLING IN SOUTHERN LEBANON OVER THE WEEKEND. THE RIGHTISTS AND THE ISRAELIS APPEAR TO BE ADOPTING A NEW STRATEGY. THEY SEEM TO BE MOVING TO OUTFLANK THE PALESTINIANS IN THE ARQOUB BY TAKING CONTROL OF THE SLOPES OF MOUNT HERMON. MEANWHILE, THE RIGHTISTS ON SATURDAY ISSUED A STRONGLY WORDED STATEMENT ON THE SITUATION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON. THEY SAID THAT SHOULD THE ISRAELIS INTERVENE IN THE SOUTH, THE PALESTINIANS WOULD BE HELD RESPONSIBLE. THIS COULD PRESAGE A WORSENING OF THE SIMMERING CONFLICT THERE. (SECRET)

2. ISRAEL. ALTHOUGH BOTH BEGIN'S GOVERNMENT AND THE  
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 149433

LABOR PARTY LEADERSHIP HAVE PUBLICLY PROMISED TO AVOID CONFRONTATION, THERE IS CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE WITHIN THE

HISTADRUT AND THE LABOR PARTY TO CHALLENGE BEGIN AND THE FORTITUDE OF HIS GOVERNMENT. WITH LABOR RETAINING CONTROL OF THE HISTADRUT, THE PARTY'S YOUNG GUARD, MAPAM, AND THE KIBBUTZ MOVEMENT WANT THIS ORGANIZATION TO BE

UTILIZED TO CONFRONT BEGIN, PARTICULARLY ON HIS CONSERVATIVE ECONOMIC POLICIES.

3. SPEAKING TO REPORTERS YESTERDAY, BEGIN SAID THAT HE APPRECIATED THE US DECISION TO PROVIDE \$115 MILLION IN MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO ISRAEL, ADDING THAT ISRAEL "HOPES IT IS A SIGN OF REAL FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE US AND ISRAEL." ALSO, PRESIDENT CARTER'S SIGNING OF THE ANTI-BOYCOTT LEGISLATION WAS RECEIVED WELL BY THE ISRAELIS; AN ISRAELI GOVERNMENT PRESS RELEASE DESCRIBED IT AS A BREAKTHROUGH IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE BOYCOTT," AND THE JERUSALEM POST EDITORIALIZED THAT THE US LAW HAD "EXCEEDED EVERYONE'S EXPECTATIONS."

4. THE LIKUD HAS REPORTEDLY OFFERED A NEW CONCESSION TO THE DMC IN AN EFFORT TO BRING THE LATTER PARTY INTO THE GOVERNMENT. A COMPROMISE LIKUD FORMULA PROPOSED TO DMC LEADERS WOULD ALLOW THE DMC TO BREAK COALITION DISCIPLINE IN THE KNESSET WHEN THE ISSUE OF ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN OCCUPIED AREAS--WHICH THE DMC OPPOSE--IS ADDRESSED. THE DMC HAS BEEN DEMANDING A VETO POWER OVER ANY PROPOSED SETTLEMENTS. (CONFIDENTIAL)

5. EGYPT. AL-AHRAM REPORTED YESTERDAY THAT THE US WAS PREPARING NEW PROPOSALS FOR A MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 149433

IN A DISPATCH FROM ITS WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT, THE NEWSPAPER SAID THE PROPOSALS WOULD BE CARRIED BY SECRETARY VANCE ON HIS FORTHCOMING TOUR OF THE MIDDLE EAST. (UNCLASSIFIED)

6. SYRIA. OUR DEFENSE ATTACHE IN DAMASCUS HAS LEARNED FROM A RELIABLE SOURCE THAT SYRIAN FORCES WERE TO GO ON ALERT ON JUNE 26. (WE HAVE, AS YET, NO CONFIRMATION THAT THEY HAVE DONE SO.) THE SOURCE SAID THAT THE SYRIANS HAD BEEN ON A SIMILAR ALERT A WEEK AGO FOR SEVERAL DAYS. AT THAT TIME, THE SYRIANS HAD BEEN DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT SOUTH LEBANON.

7. INTERNALLY, THE JUNE 18 ASSASSINATION OF AN ALAWITE GENERAL--REPORTEDLY COMMANDER OF SYRIA'S MISSILE DEFENSES--HAS CREATED A SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL STIR. THE ASSASSINS HAVE APPARENTLY NOT YET BEEN APPREHENDED, DESPITE AN ALL-OUT INVESTIGATION BY SYRIA'S SECURITY APPARATUS.

8. SPECULATION AS TO WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE KILLING HAS CENTERED ON SEVERAL GROUPS.

(A) SOME SUSPICION HAS NATURALLY FALLEN ON THE IRAQIS, ALTHOUGH EMBASSY DAMASCUS' CONTACTS GENERALLY DISCOUNT THIS AND THE SYRIAN MEDIA HAS NOT LAUNCHED ANOTHER ANTI-IRAQI PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN.

(B) THE RIGHTIST MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, WHO OPPOSE THE BAATHIST IDEOLOGY OF THE REGIME AND WHOSE FOLLOWING HAS GROWN IN RECENT MONTHS.

(C) RELATIVES OF TWO PERSONS FROM HAMA, A SUNNI TOWN, WHO WERE EXECUTED RECENTLY BY THE REGIME FOR DISSIDENT ACTIVITIES.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 STATE 149433

9. THE MOST PREVALENT THEORY, HOWEVER, SEEMS TO BE THAT THE RULING ALAWITES ARE INVOLVED IN INTERNAL FEUDING. SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT THE ALAWITES ARE DIVIDED AND AT ODDS WITH EACH OTHER; IN PARTICULAR, A DISSIDENT ALAWITE FACTION WITHIN THE MILITARY--THE "UMRAN OFFICERS"--IS REPORTEDLY CONTEMPLATING A MOVE AGAINST THE REGIME. ONE ALLEGATION IS THAT THE REGIME ITSELF HAD PERPETRATED THE JUNE 18 ASSASSINATION AS PART OF AN EFFORT TO STRIKE BACK AT THESE ALAWITE DISSIDENTS.

10. NEVERTHELESS--WHOEVER IS RESPONSIBLE--THE KILLING IS FURTHER EVIDENCE THAT ASSAD'S REGIME FACES A SMALL NUMBER OF WELL-ORGANIZED OPPONENTS. THEIR CAPABILITIES, HOWEVER, APPEAR TO BE LIMITED TO SELECTED ASSASSINATIONS AND OTHER LESSER ANTI-REGIME ACTIONS. ASSAD RETAINS FIRM CONTROL OF THE MILITARY AS A WHOLE AND SYRIA'S SECURITY APPARATUS, AND AS SUCH A SUCCESSFUL MOVE AGAINST HIS REGIME SEEMS UNLIKELY. INFUSIONS OF AID, SUCH AS THE RECENT SAUDI PAYMENTS, WILL ALSO HELP TO BOLSTER ASSAD AND UNDERCUT THOSE WHO ARE DISCONTENTED WITH HIS RULE. SPORADIC INCIDENTS OF ANTI-REGIME ACTIONS WILL LIKELY CONTINUE, HOWEVER. (SECRET/NOFORN) VANCE

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